

# Tokyo *time*

As Australian travellers ready themselves to travel again, **REMI O'REILLY** suggests safe, clean and kind Tokyo should be top of the list for families.

Tokyo is a modern-day wonderland where 1000-year-old temples and gardens nestle humbly in the shadows of cloud-bursting skyscrapers, and kooky, kaleidoscopic novelty eateries cosy up with unabashed sass to Michelin-starred fine diners. It is safe, clean and unapologetically eccentric, and the many temptations of this titan of technology and tradition have never been more alluring.

## Future-proofed

Already renowned for conscientious cleanliness, the worldwide pandemic has seen Tokyo implement even more stringent health measures and thoughtful services, with just the right amount of signature Japanese quirk, to prevent the spread of coronavirus and keep residents and visitors safe.

From ultra-modern **Roppongi Hills** to the luxurious **Ginza Six**, the city's biggest shopping and entertainment centres have stepped up their already impressive hygiene game to ensure the safety of shoppers, taking steps to prioritise peace of mind for families with tourist services, baby rooms, in centre childcare and porters.

Hotels are following suit, with several introducing robots to provide services. At the **Shinagawa Prince Hotel N Tower**, social distancing is easy as can be with Harry the room service robot delivering items from yummy snacks to amenities for children to your door. And while food deliveries are always an option, dining out has been made safer with some counter restaurants, including popular ramen chain **Ichiran Ramen**, offering private Ramen Focus Booths. Safe and clean, the booths mean diners can focus on the flavours of the dish with minimal distractions, slurping to their socially distanced heart's content.

Getting around Tokyo has been made just as convenient. For families who'd prefer to traverse Tokyo privately, taxis have had automatic doors since the 1964 Olympics. While initially conceptualised as a novel way to express Japanese hospitality, in 2020 they have become a sanitary godsend, as passengers don't have to handle taxi doors when getting in or out.

## A river runs through it

Cruise Tokyo's waterways aboard the futuristic **Hotaluna Water Bus**, which offers lovely views, especially from the open-air roof deck. It's a fun, safe way to explore the city, with terminals at many of the city's major family attractions.

Disembark to see Tokyo at its neon-bathed best in the entertainment hub of **Odaiba**, get lost among the light gardens and infinite crystal worlds of extraordinary **teamLab Borderless**, then dive deep into a world of technology at **Miraikan – The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation** (open by reservation only at the time of writing), where the kids can say hello to ASIMO, the world's most advanced humanoid robot.

You can also take the water bus to Toyosu, the new home of the world's most famous fish market. Kids might prefer to ditch the fish fest for **KidZania**, a safety-conscious kid-sized scale replica of a real city, where they are in charge and can take on their grown-up dream careers as firemen, chefs, doctors and pilots.

Float a little further along the Sumida River to Asakusa – home of the seventh-century **Sensō-ji temple** – for a taste of old Japan. In its side streets, you can walk in the footsteps of monks and geisha or explore its low-rise loveliness by man-powered rickshaw. Then

take the leap from old back to new on a scenic detour along **Tokyo Mizumachi**, a new area dotted with shops and cafes, connecting ancient Asakusa with futuristic **Tokyo Skytree**, Japan's tallest tower.

## Gods and monsters

Families seeking the archetypal Tokyo *kawaii* experience can always surf the outrageous rainbow wave into **Kawaii Monster Café**, where you'll be met by retina-searing neon interiors and "monsters" armed with hand sanitiser and menus promising insanely over-the-top food. It's the kind of squeaky clean but colourful craziness one would expect from Harajuku. Less expected is that just 500 metres away lays the sprawling grounds of **Meiji Jingu**, a shrine dedicated to the much-revered Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken. Surrounded by tens of thousands of trees and the sound of chirping birds, the shrine provides not only space but a peaceful pocket of serenity that, after the bright lights and brashness of Harajuku's monsters, is like sipping a spiritual G&T. ■

## Tokyo Report Card

**Info** [gotokyo.org](http://gotokyo.org) [tokyotokyo.jp](http://tokyotokyo.jp)  
**Getting around** [suijobus.co.jp/en/](http://suijobus.co.jp/en/)  
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**For current information on COVID-19 in Tokyo:** [metro.tokyo.lg.jp/english/](http://metro.tokyo.lg.jp/english/)



From left to right: 01 Asakusa Senso-ji Temple 02 Local colours 03 Meiji Jingu Shrine 04 Giant fairyfloss in Harajuku 05 Tokyo Skytree 06 Rainbow cheese at Harajuku 07 Hotaluna Water Bus, Sumidagawa River. Images 01, 03, 05 & 07 © TCVB 08 Kawaii Monster Cafe 09 Tokyu Plaza Omotesando. Images 02, 04, 06, 08 & 09 © Tracy Morris @theblondenomads